



December 15, 2004

An Open Letter to the House of Representatives: Support the Republican Study Committee's Proposed Rules Changes for the 109th Congress

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 350,000 members of the National Taxpayers Union (NTU), I urge you to work to adopt the ten common sense and taxpayer-friendly rules changes as proposed by the Republican Study Committee (RSC). As you know, the federal budget has been growing out of control for several years now, but the larger problem is that Congress's own rules create incentives for higher levels of spending and make it exceedingly difficult for Members to understand and maintain oversight over the vast number of spending projects that come before them on a given day.

The RSC proposal, therefore, is a simple exercise in "good government" that deserves support from all sides of the political spectrum. Fiscal conservatives who are concerned about the overall size and growth of government should be supportive, but those who are concerned with preserving adequate funding levels for effective government programs also have incentives to ensure that Congress's own rules make it easier to keep track of the money it spends and eliminate waste.

The RSC has proposed "10 Simple Rules" for reform that are listed below:

1. **Protect Points of Order** by creating a separate point of order against any special rule waiving points of order that limit spending.
2. **Allow House Debate to Refer to Senate**: this simply removes prohibitions against Members referring to actions taken by the Senate or individual Senators to foster a more open discussion of important issues.
3. **Unveil Hidden Debt Votes** by repealing the so-called "Gephardt Rule" that provides for the automatic passage of a House joint resolution changing the public debt ceiling to conform with the budget.
4. **Learn the Cost of Legislation** by requiring every bill (including unreported bills and conference reports) to be accompanied by cost estimates.
5. **Cap Entitlements** by creating a new supermajority (three-fifths) point of order against increases in direct spending. The point of order would not apply to any measure that would decrease the long-term unfunded liability of an entitlement program.
6. **Lock Away Savings** by establishing both a mandatory and discretionary Family Budget Protection Account, so that floor amendments can realize actual savings by lowering spending allocations.
7. **Vote on Expensive Legislation** by requiring roll call votes on legislation costing more than \$50 million, including those being considered on the suspension calendar.

8. **Strengthen Spending Oversight** by requiring that any bill reported from a committee that either exceeds the allowable amount of spending under the budget or fails to include a cost estimate in the accompanying committee report be automatically referred to the Budget Committee.

9. **Budget for Emergency Spending** by requiring that any budget resolution reported from the House Budget Committee include a reserve fund for non-military emergencies.

10. **Revise Staff Floor Privileges** to allow full-time staff from CMOs with over 30 Members to have floor access to be able to appropriately staff a Member, even in procedural motions.

Each of these proposals would benefit taxpayers by ensuring that Congress has enough information and the right incentives to spend taxpayer money in a more frugal manner. Quite simply, with spending still out of control and deficits expected far into the future, it is time to fix a broken system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Gessing". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and a long, sweeping underline.

Paul Gessing
Director of Government Affairs